

rhetoric has been always summoning up the false dichotomy. Recall, back in October 2002, what was the choice the President proposed? Invade Iraq or do nothing and let Saddam and the terrorists win. We recall the rhetoric. It seems hollow now when we think back to it. What was left out of the equation, of course, was what was already being done: international inspectors of the United Nations on the ground in Iraq looking for weapons of mass destruction, supposedly the source of our great conflict with the Iraq regime.

There are other things that could have been done, too, much short of an invasion. There were, in fact, reports of terrorist activities. Zarqawi was in the Kurdish region. What would have prevented the United States from launching a very discrete military operation against Zarqawi in the fall of 2002 in the Kurdish area, an area we were helping to protect by our overflights of aircraft? Nothing, except, I believe, the administration didn't want to give up a good rhetorical device: this supposed terrorist presence in a part of Iraq that Saddam did not control.

Again, here now, it is back to the false choices: Surge 20,000 troops or watch the country collapse as we leave precipitously next week. That is not the choice. The choice is missions that are more effectively aligned with our national security interests: going after terrorists, training Iraqi security forces, protecting the territorial integrity of Iraq, complemented with active diplomatic actions, complemented with, we hope, progress by the Iraqis themselves in political decision-making. That, I think, is the way to go.

We have, again, I think a very difficult situation before us. It requires not only debate, but I think it requires at this moment a decision by the Senate on a very simple proposal: where we stand with respect to the President's proposal for escalation. Now, others have come to the floor and pointed out past statements that have been made with respect to increasing American forces. I have been open to these arguments. Frankly, at this juncture I don't feel persuaded. In the past, when someone had asked me: Would you increase the size of forces in Iraq, certainly in those first few days after the invasion, and after July of 2003 when I visited Iraq and found there were thousands of weapons dumps that were not being protected, I came back here and I think, along with Senator HAGEL, was one of the first to call for an increased size of our Army so we could deploy more forces to Iraq. But that window has closed very dramatically and nothing, frankly, was done by the administration to respond to those concerns.

I have said publicly that if a commander in the field came to me and said: We need additional forces, I would look at that proposal very carefully. In fact, in a press conference I was asked:

So in no way would you be on board with the McCain plan to surge in with, you know,

50,000 strong additional forces on the ground, you would not be in favor of that?

My response:

I think I responded to the question before, that if the military commanders in Iraq said we need for X number of months 20 plus, 25,000 troops to do this mission and within reasonable certainty was assessed, I would have to listen to that proposal, sir.

Well, I have listened to that proposal and I find it wanting. I find it wanting, based on the doctrine of the U.S. Army as it has evolved today. I find it wanting because of the lack of complementary and civilian support for that proposal. I find it wanting because of the lack of any serious indication that the Government of Iraq will make those tough political decisions. So I have considered it as I said I would, but I don't think it is the right way to proceed. Not at all.

Now, I am not alone, and I don't think it would be a shock to anyone to suggest this issue of escalation has prompted criticism from a wide group of individuals. GEN Colin L. Powell, former Secretary of State, said in December:

I am not persuaded that another surge of troops into Baghdad for the purposes of suppressing this sectarian violence, this civil war, will work.

Again, I think General Powell's insights and experience are very critical at this moment.

The Joint Chiefs indicated, at least as reported in the Washington Post in December, using anonymous White House sources, that they were opposed, that White House officials are aggressively promoting the concept over the unanimous disagreement of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. That is in December.

Time Magazine reported that General Abizaid said he opposes more troops because it would discourage Iraqis from taking responsibility for their own security. Here is a general, an officer who has served for decades, the most knowledgeable individual when it comes to Middle East military-political issues within the United States Army, within the Department of Defense, and that is his opinion.

Robert Gates—before he became Secretary of Defense, or before he was confirmed, according to two administration officials asking not to be named—Robert Gates expressed his skepticism about a troop surge in Iraq on his first day on the job—excuse me; he was Secretary of Defense—at a Pentagon meeting overseeing the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marines.

We are not alone. There have been some perhaps eleventh-hour conversions for this surge, but I think there are a number of individuals with significant experience and insight, unquestioned patriots, who question this proposal.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. President, I see there are other speakers on the floor, so at this time I ask unanimous consent that at 2 p.m.,

the period for morning business be extended for 60 minutes, with the time divided and controlled as follows: 30 minutes each for Senators MENENDEZ and ROBERTS or their designees; that the Senate then proceed to executive session to consider the nomination of GEN George W. Casey, Jr.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

IRAQ

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, last Friday I had the privilege of attending and speaking before a "Farewell Dinner" in honor of LTG David Petraeus at the Command and Staff College of the U.S. Army at Fort Leavenworth, KS.

To say the least, it was quite an evening of tribute in behalf of the general and his wife, who has become admired and beloved serving as the Commanding General of the Army's Intellectual Center. I estimate there were around 250 officers and their wives and many from the Leavenworth community to pay tribute to General and Mrs. Petraeus, to wish them well, and to express pride and confidence in the general's immediate mission. He left for Iraq this past Monday, 2 days ago.

Throughout the evening I had the opportunity to again visit with David Petraeus, his feelings about his new mission, his impressive knowledge with regard to the war in Iraq, the history of the region, and his understanding with regard to the nature of past wars of insurgency and the insurgency we face in Iraq. While at the Command and Staff school, he wrote the Army's new manual on counterterrorism. Let me say as a former marine who helped write a similar manual years ago for the U.S. Marine Corps, I find this man unique in his knowledge and his command ability.

I made a few remarks at the dinner, and being a Senator, why, the remarks turned into a speech with some additional strongly held beliefs that I had penciled out in addition to my prepared remarks in behalf of General and Mrs. Petraeus. I thought twice about saying some very frank and candid views, but as everybody knows, marines don't hold back. So concluding my comments, I was glad I said what I said in that virtually everybody in the room—all 250—told me that I had said what they could not say. Those who wear their officer rank on their shoulders or their enlisted stripes on their sleeves in most cases do not comment on policy decisions or politics no matter how strongly they feel. They follow orders and they serve their country.

I feel somewhat the same trepidation today. However, I believe my remarks to the general, his officer corps, veterans of previous wars, are dead on to